



Michigan State Police

Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division

Informational Bulletin

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Michigan's Use of the Integrated Public Alert Warning System (IPAWS)

The Michigan State Police, Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division (MSP/EMHSD) has developed guidance outlining the Integrated Public Alert Warning System (IPAWS), specifically how IPAWS will impact Michigan-specific systems and how local emergency management personnel can access IPAWS.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) IPAWS program is designed to improve communication efforts between emergency management officials and the public by utilizing satellite television, cable television, electronic billboards, and the Internet. In addition, IPAWS updates the existing population warning systems, including the Emergency Alert System (EAS), Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS), and the National Weather Service's All-Hazards Emergency Message Collection System, called HazCollect.

IPAWS uses a standardized system called Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) for messages, which allows messages to be disseminated to all standardized vendor equipment. All existing EAS, CMAS, and NOAA warning systems are IPAWS CAP compliant. Access to IPAWS is provided through FEMA certified software vendors, which are listed online at <http://www.fema.gov/private-sector-0#psdevelopers>.

State of Michigan IPAWS Policy

Previous to the development of the IPAWS network, access to public alerting systems in the state of Michigan was via two methods:

1. Emergency Management Network (EMnet) systems at the state and county level have the ability to issue EAS warnings; or,
2. Those emergency management programs that chose not to participate in EMnet accessed the EAS via HazCollect.

Due to the implementation of IPAWS, the HazCollect system is no longer available directly to emergency management programs. At this time, NOAA will still issue a Non-Weather Emergency Message (NWEM) for a county emergency management program if they are contacted directly by phone.

State policy, as defined in the current State Emergency Alert System (EAS) Plan, allows access to public warning systems at the county and state level. As a result, local emergency management programs must contact their county emergency management program to issue public alerts. This policy remains intact for issuing public alerts to EAS, NOAA Weather Radios, and CMAS via IPAWS. An IPAWS sub-committee will be formed under the current State Emergency Communication Committee (SECC) to guide future state policy and development and coordination of IPAWS within the state.

CMAS Authority

CMAS allows local, county, and state emergency management programs to issue Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) to specific areas in a Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) county code. This ability presents coordination issues, as it would be possible for local, the county, and state emergency management authorities to simultaneously issue CMAS alerts for the same FIPS code using different IPAWS-compliant software.

To avoid potential coordination issues, each county emergency management program is responsible for delegating the responsibility of issuing CMAS alerts to local authorities. The MSP/EMHSD will follow the direction of the county emergency management program when reviewing an IPAWS public alerting application of a local emergency management program, specifically in regards to CMAS alerts. To grant a local authority the ability to issue CMAS alerts, the MSP/EMHSD requires a notification letter on official letterhead from a county government official who is not a member of the county emergency management program. If this letter is not received, the MSP/EMHSD will place the application on hold.

IPAWS Capabilities

The state of Michigan has made upgrades to several communication pathways enhancing the use of IPAWS and capabilities to issue public alerts in the state, including upgrades to the Emergency Management Network, Emergency Alert System, and the Common Alerting Protocol System.

EMnet Upgrades

In 2012, all EMnet terminals within the state were upgraded to IPAWS compatibility. With this upgrade, an EMnet terminal can now be used to issue EAS messages, NWEMs, and CMAS alerts via the IPAWS network. All EMnet terminals at the state and county level can issue public alerts through the EAS without utilizing IPAWS.

EAS Upgrades

All state EAS broadcasters have upgraded their EAS receivers to be IPAWS CAP compliant, so an Internet outage will not impair the ability to broadcast EAS messages. Due to changes within the broadcast industry, the majority of EAS transmitter locations are now automated with no personnel on duty. In response, all EMnet terminals have been upgraded to allow emergency managers to broadcast EAS messages directly to the air with both text and audio with no intervention by broadcast personnel.

Note: If you have an EMnet terminal and authority to issue EAS messages and **have not been trained** on the new capabilities, please contact Alicia Clack of the Michigan Association of Broadcasters at AlishaMarquette@michmab.com.

CAP System Upgrades

The state has invested in a system called a "CAP aggregator," which is on the IPAWS network and allows anyone authorized in the state to receive IPAWS public alerts. The CAP aggregator allows the state to issue public alerts to systems that are not IPAWS compliant, as long as an IPAWS receiver is purchased. These systems include electronic billboards, Internet radio stations, and campus mass notification systems.

IPAWS Eligibility & Application Process

All Michigan emergency management programs are eligible to use IPAWS by applying to FEMA. IPAWS has two types of permissions for emergency management programs. The first type grants approval for an emergency management program to use IPAWS for secure communications, which requires requesting a Common Operating Group (COG) agreement from FEMA. The second type, which is applied for after the COG agreement is granted, requires emergency management programs to apply to FEMA to get an IPAWS public alerting authority permission in order to be authorized to issue alerts to public warning systems through IPAWS.

As part of the application process, FEMA sends all public alerting authority applications to a designated state agency for review to assure that each program's application complies with applicable state law. In the state of Michigan, the reviewing authority is the MSP/EMHSD. In this capacity, the MSP/EMHSD's sole role is reviewing the application and ensuring it is compliant with state laws; the MSP/EMHSD does not approve the application for IPAWS. The MSP/EMHSD will contact any local program whose application requires changes per state law. After completing any necessary changes, the local program should resubmit the application directly to the MSP/EMHSD. Once reviewed, the application will be returned to the local program for submission to FEMA, which will then issue a COG identifier to the local program that will be input into the IPAWS software.

Local programs completing the public alerting authority application must designate the systems, the FIPS codes, and the types of systems for which they will issue alerts. Please note, the Child Abduction Emergency Code (CAE) and the Civil Emergency Code (CEM) are reserved for state use and cannot be authorized for county or local programs.

National Weather Service and HazCollect

The National Weather Service (NWS) has an additional application required to utilize the HazCollect system via IPAWS. These instructions can be found at <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/os/hazcollect/govt.shtml#4>.

To request access to HazCollect from the NWS, complete the IPAWS application process for a public alerting authority as indicated above. Once you have completed the IPAWS process, you will be ready to apply for access to HazCollect. An e-mail must be sent to Michael.Szkil@noaa.gov and Mary.Fairbanks@noaa.gov to notify that you've applied for access to IPAWS. Afterward, go to the HazCollect registration page at <https://ocwww.weather.gov/cog/login.php> and complete the registration process.

A representative of the NWS will notify you if there are any specific issues identified in utilizing the IPAWS system with the NWS HazCollect system. The MSP/EMHSD recommends that you contact the NWS personnel above before purchasing IPAWS software to discuss how to properly use the software with the HazCollect system.

Additional information about IPAWS eligibility and the application process can be found at <http://www.fema.gov/alerting-authorities>.

Contact Information

Please send all comments, questions, and concerns to Don Bouffard of the MSP/EMHSD at bouffardd@michigan.gov.